BILL TO AMEND THE TOWNS CONSERVANCY AND IMPROVEMENT REGULATION III OF 1076.

Mr. Kesava Pillai.—I beg to apply for permission to introduce a Bill to make better provision for the organization and administration of Municipalities. Till the year 1069 there was no separate organization for the control and administration of Towns in this State. In that year a Regulation called the "Towns Conservancy and Improvement Regulation" was passed by which the supervision of the sanitary arrangements in towns was entrusted to committees composed of official and non-official members appointed by the Government. Five years did not elapse before the necessity for amending the law was felt, and the existing Regulation III of 1076 was passed. This Regulation was, in the words of the late Mr. Thanu Pillai, "the first step towards Municipal action proper". It purports to be based on the Madras District Municipalities Act, 1884 (as amended by Madras Act III of 1897) and on other British Indian Municipal Acts. But in its character, it is in several essential features different from the Madras District Municipalities Act, while in the scope of its operation it is much more limited.

The committees constituted under the Regulation have not the same duties and responsibilities as the Municipal Councils constituted under the Act. Our Town Improvement Committees are, as a matter of fact, bodies whose chief duty is merely to control the actions of private individuals affecting the sanitation of urban areas. They are not active agencies responsible for the conservancy and improvement of Towns, for the diffusion of education therein, and for the promotion of other objects of public utility tending to the health, convenience and comfort of the inhabitants. In fact, Municipal Government in its true sense has not yet been inaugurated. Although the existing Regulation provides for the election of some of the members of the committee as well as for the introduction of taxation, these provisions have not in practice been brought into operation. The essential feature of Municipal Government is that each town governs itself and provides for its own wants. But the main source of income for the committees is still the Government grant; while the committees themselves are not representative bodies responsible for the administration and improvement of the towns.

Local self-government is not a new institution in India. In ancient times local affairs were managed by the village organizations which were self-governing bodies. But in the frequent political revolutions which disturbed the country, anterior to the advent of the British Power, the Village institutions gradually decayed and lost in power and importance. After the establishment of the British rule in India, however, local self-government has been quietly introduced and extended, until there are few important towns in British India which have not got at present their Municipal institutions. Travancore has advanced rather slowly in this respect, mainly through a disinclination on the part of the people to pay for what is essential to their comfort and convenience. The unlimited appropriation of the funds of the State for the conservancy and improvement of towns is wrong in principle and a source of hardship to the general tax-payer. Our towns can never improve or come to the level of towns in other civilized countries so long as they depend entirely on the Government for support, nor can they expect to obtain the privilege of self-government unless they raise their own funds. The very name of fresh taxation is repulsive to the general mass of the people, but it is a sacrifice which they must make if they wish to keep pace with other civilized countries and if they want to have a share in the management of their own affairs. While it is the anxious desire of Government that the health, comfort and convenience of the urban populations should be secured to the fullest extent and that the privilege of local self-government should be accorded as far as possible, the difficulty of finding funds always comes in the way and many necessary improvements which should have been carried out long ago have been left undone. A great future lies before us if only we understand the situation and willingly accede to measures conducive to our advancement.

With a view to introduce Municipal Government in our towns it is proposed to establish Municipal Councils composed chiefly of members elected by the

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citizens, to invest those bodies with power to raise the necessary funds and to make them responsible for the proper sanitation and improvement of the urban areas entrusted to their care. The Bill which I seek permission to introduce is framed chiefly on the lines of the Madras District Municipalities Act. The proposed Municipal Councils will have much larger powers and responsibilities than the present committees, and their Chairmen and Secretaries will have full executive powers.

The Town Fund will be composed not only of all moneys which may be transferred by Government for purposes of local administration but also of moneys which may be raised by taxes and all rents and profits recovered by the Municipal Councils, and all fines, fees and penalties paid or levied under the proposed law. The funds of the Municipalities will be applied by the Municipal Councils to the construction, repair and maintenance of streets, bridges and other means of communication, the construction, maintenance and repair of hospitals, dispensaries, lunatic asylums, poor-houses, markets, drains, sewers, latrines, waterworks, tanks, wells, recreation grounds, gardens, parks, and other works of public utility, the training and employment of medical practitioners and vaccinators, the sanitary inspection of towns and villages, the registration of births and deaths, the watering and the lighting of streets, the cleansing of streets, tanks, wells, drains, sewers, latrines, and other works of a similar nature, the planting and preservation of trees, the diffusion of education and other measures of public utility calculated to promote the safety, health, comfort or convenience of the people. The Bill contains provision defining the duties of the Municipal Council relative to the fulfilment of the above objects, as also provisions regulating the collection of taxes, compulsory vaccination, house-building and various other matters. I hope that it will, if passed, result in a distinct advance being made in Municipal Government and will tend to secure for our towns better sanitation, better water-supply, better roads, better lighting and better means of improvement in various directions.

Permission was granted accordingly.

STEAM-BOILERS AND PRIME-MOVERS BILL.

Mr. Mahadeva Iyer.—I beg to apply for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for the inspection and control of Steam-boilers and Prime-movers in Travancore on the lines of Madras Act III of 1893. The want of such an enactment has been already felt in connection with the steam boat service in North Travancore. For some years past there has been a regular steam boat service between Cochin and Alleppey and from Alleppey to Kottayam and it has recently been extended to Quilon. With the opening of the Tinnevelly-Quilon railway a fresh impetus has been given to the development of steam navigation along our backwaters and canals, and several enterprising firms have turned their attention to this line of business. In July 1902 the Dewan Peishkar of Kottayam (Mr. Padmanabha Iyer) brought to the notice of Government the unsatisfactory condition of the steam boats plying between Alleppey and Cochin and urged the necessity for having the boilers and boats examined. Government issued orders to have them examined by the Executive Engineer of the Northern Division, but though three years have elapsed since the order was issued the examination has not yet been fully carried out. Several causes have contributed to this delay, but the most important of them is the want of a legislative enactment to enforce such examination or to suspend the steam boat service on failure of the Company to submit their boats for examination within the prescribed time. The present Dewan Peishkar of Kottayam has now reported to Government that nothing can be done unless a special enactment is passed. It is not merely on account of the steam boat service that the special enactment is called for. There are a large number of factories in which steam power is used. It is necessary in the interests of the public that all steam boilers and prime-movers now in use or which may hereafter be introduced should be subjected to periodical, professional examination in view to test their soundness and safety. I shall not trouble the Council with any further remarks. If the permission I seek be granted, I shall place before the Council a Bill drafted on the lines of Madras Act III of 1893 which contains a few simple provisions regulating the periodical inspection of boilers and prime-movers, the issue of licenses and certificates of competency of persons entrusted with the management of boilers and the usual penalties for infringement of the law.

Permission was granted accordingly.

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